Kawasaki 650 Dual Sport News

MAY/JUNE 1997

Send subscriptions, comments and articles to:
Kawasaki 650 Dual Sport News
P.O. Box 698
Sandia Park, New Mexico
87047
USA
***K650DSN*@aol.com**
(505)281-9886

Subscriptions:
In the United States
$15.00/Year
Outside the US
$20.00/Year

Back issues
$3.00 each.

Make checks payable to:
Gino Pokluda
Please write: **K 650 DSN** on check.

Disclaimer
***Kawasaki 650 Dual Sport News* is in no way shape or form affiliated with Kawasaki of America. All technical tips, product reviews, bike modifications and any other advice printed in this newsletter are only for the purpose of information sharing . Modifications made to your bike are your responsibility and *Kawasaki 650 Dual Sport News* assumes absolutely no responsibility for accidents that occur anywhere in the world.**

Moto Musing

Gino Pokluda

Every now and then I get the urge to try something completely different. I really don't know why that is either. I hate to admit it, but I'm predictable and, er.. well.. maybe a little dull. So when I started spending time looking at cruiser bikes, I was somewhat surprised with myself. Every morning, it's either the KLR650 or the TDM850 and I, doing the morning grind to the office.

Sometimes the SR500 gets wheeled out of the shed and does commuter duty. On some Sundays, however, when I want to do a lazy ride through the mountains with a Neil Young tune in my head, I long for something a little more cruiser-ish with a big V-twin and raked front end. So on a warm, March Saturday afternoon, I took delivery of a Yamaha Virago 1100 Special.

It's those changes in attitudes, changes in latitudes, nothing is ever the same. For all of our running and all of our cunning, If we weren't all crazy, we'd all go insane.

Jimmy Buffet

Those who know me and didn't know this little tidbit of information are probably flat on their backs and in need of a 911 call right about now. It is a bike that anyone who knows me would never think I would own. Over the years I have been guilty of poking fun at the cruiser crowd and the current crop of so-called 'Harley Clones' that have flooded the market and brought long overdue revenues to our dealers. I used to get really irritated when a sparkling clean cruiser passed in the other direction while I was aboard my bike, completely encrusted with crud from a winters worth of riding. I guess time has changed that, though, since now I spend more time admiring their bikes instead of shaking my head. I must be getting old, I suppose.

So why the Virago, you ask? Well, to be honest I really like the look of the 'Fat' bikes like the new Kawasaki Vulcan Classics and Honda ACE. But not being one to buy

something solely on looks, I began doing research into the cruisers.

When the pizza and beer was all gone, it was the Virago 1100 (although I do not think it's the best looking cruiser) that pulled it all together for me. First and foremost, when I sat on the Virago and closed my eyes, I could swear I was sitting on a 1975 Yamaha XS650B, a bike that will always have a special place in my heart. My feet are just a tad bit more forward , but all else falls into place. Second, the Virago is one maintenance friendly motorcycle with a center stand, cast wheels, screw and locknut adjustable valves, shaft drive and easy access to all other necessities. Knowing how I will undoubtedly take the big Virago out on the open road, the big comfy seat, great ergonomics and gas tank that is only two-tenths of a gallon less than my TDM850, were all icing on the cake. I purchased the XV1100 from a friend who runs a dealership 250 miles away.

Upon rolling the bike out of the showroom, I clicked off a quick 150 miles that afternoon. The next day, after a long night on a hard bed at the Motel 6, I rode the Virago back home making one stop for breakfast and one for gas. Rolling into my driveway that afternoon, I realized that this bike was forcing me to re-evaluate my outlook on bikes.

(Continued on page 2)

...Musing

(Continued from page 1)

My evaluation of a bike cannot be made simply by how it is pigeon-holed by marketers anymore. Although I like the Virago because it is the cruiser I was shopping for, I like it more because it is a motorcycle that works, which, when you think about it, is how all bike should be rated. Simply put, the bike fits me, rather than me having to fit the bike, just like the my KLR and TDM. Furthermore, it is probably the most comfortable ride in the garage at this point in time.

For those worried that this is somehow signaling the end of my dual sporting days, not to worry. The KLR650 is in a league of its own when it comes to my motorcycle tastes and will remain safe in the garage for some time to come. I guess I just wanted to relate this story to other motorcycle enthusiasts. I really don't view it as a change in direction, just a change in attitude•

ALASKA DREAMING

Paul Cain

After 30+ years of motorcycling, mostly long distance touring, I'm finally heading to Alaska this Summer of '97. Postponed going to Alaska all these years because I never wanted to be rushed and now that I'm retired, will take the months of June and July to explore Alaska.

Spending most of my motorcycle riding days in Texas, I've ridden more 800 mile days than I can count and a few 1,000 mile days over the years. Have never owned a "luxo-tourer" but do like to be comfortable. My present mount, after many years of BMWs, is a 1991 ST1100 and my new addition to the already overcrowded garage is a 1997 KLR650.

The ST is a great sport touring, pavement motorcycle. I still enjoy it but missed the ability to explore the gravel roads less traveled. I certainly didn't want to wrestle the weight of the ST going to Alaska or frankly ding it up.

Once I decided to "do Alaska" I began to research to find the best dual sport motorcycle for the money. My only past experience with a dual sport mount was in the 1980s when I bought a three year old BMW R80GS Paris/ Dakar. I logged around 40K on that bike and really enjoyed the gravel roads of New Mexico, Colorado and Utah, as well as a run from Texas up to Newfoundland and Labrador.

Choosing a new dual sport did take some careful research. When I worked I could generally afford to get a new or late model bike every few years and my main problem was not having enough time. Now that I'm retired, I have the time but not much money. The old time/money dilemma still persists but in reverse.

I'm a nut for range and that was a great asset with the R80GS P/D with it's 8 gallon tank. I knew the new BMW 650 thumper was soon to be introduced to the US but figured (correctly as it turns out) that it would be very expensive compared with the other single cylinder dual sports from Japan.

The KLR ended up as my choice basically

(Continued on page 3)

Paul Cain's Alaska KLR650. Note Clearview shield and folded rear rack extension. Nice work!

UPDATES

KLX650 Owners will now be getting some articles to read as K650DSN has acquired a slightly (ab)used KLX650C and will be starting an ongoing project.

Capital Cycle

There has been a great deal of discontent with Capital Cycles, so I decided to give them a call and find out what was going on. In February, there was some major changes in personnel and the Company is still reeling from the impact of those changes. The owner assures me however, that problems with charge cards being debited prior to the shipment of merchandise have been rectified. Capital Cycles also states that they will still import the Five-Stars center stand for the KLR650. Should you decide to order one for your late model KLR, simply state that you are ordering it for a 1990 KLR650 and there will

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2)

be no confusion.

Center Stands

Speaking of center stands, Dual Star hopes to have their stands available by late May or early June. Mike Walburn also wanted me to pass along some other product information. Dual Star is now an authorized Pelican bag dealer and can get the full line of Pelican bags which can be used as saddle bags. Other KLR650 specific items slated for release this spring and summer are a muffler shield, tail bag, fairing pouch, tube carrier, heavy duty rear brake master cylinder bracket, and the popular handlebar mounted co-pilot bag.

M&P

M&P is a mega accessories warehouse in the UK. After several failed attempts at calling them, I was actually able to speak to a friendly, living person and confirm that they do stock KLR650 center stands. I

(Continued on page 4)

...Alaska Dreaming

(Continued from page 2)

because of the large gas tank, water cooling and the fact that it had been manufactured long enough to have been refined and have after market accessories available.

Ordered the '97 model from my old dealer back in Texas in August and found myself on a cheap Southwest Airline seat a few weeks later heading from Indianapolis to Houston. Put 2,500 miles on it during my indirect rout from Houston back home to Bloomington, Indiana. My first motel night in Arkansas found the shiny new KLR parked comfortably at the foot of my bed (try sneaking an 800 lb. Honda ST1100 into your motel room). I was already discovering the joys of a light weight single.

So after all those years of cycling, I've finally discovered what all you old time thumper riders have known all along -single cylinder motorcycles have a charm all their own and the KLR has really won me over. Still love my ST but find more often than not, when I decide to take an afternoon ride, I generally end up on the KLR.

So, what does a long time sport tour rider and limited dual sport guy do with a new thumper to prepare it for the long haul up to the Arctic Ocean on Prudhoe Bay? These accompanying pictures tell part of the story. Remember, my goal is to make the KLR a comfortable dual sport tourer and not a dirt bike. At age 60, comfort is definitely important and I'm still capable of doing an occasional 1,000 day as witnessed last year when I rode the ST straight through from Houston, Texas to Indiana (1,050 miles).

Custom seat choice was easy. I've had many seats made over the years and the seat which has no equal in my opinion is the Russell "Day Long". Their patented design is unique and each saddle is custom-fitted according to your size and build. I had them leave off all decorative stitching so it would be as water proof as possible. They use top quality grade marine vinyl and I have never had one of their saddles rip or come unstitched.

When ordering, you are required to submit pictures of yourself on your cycle, posed in your normal riding position as well as your inseam measurement and weight. They won't build the seat without the required pictures and guarantee their product to meet your satisfaction or your money back. I had them make the back part of the seat low as to not interfere with my home made hinged luggage rack and also had them make the front part a little lower than normal. This is a solo saddle and as always Russell did a fine job. I also ordered a Clearview Windscreen that was supposed to be shipped to Texas to the dealer so I would have it on my ride home.

Unfortunately, they got their wires cross and my new screen was promptly deliver to Indiana the day I arrived to pick up the KLR in Houston. Instillation takes about 15 minutes as it is pre-drilled to use 5 existing holes in the KLR fairing. This makes for a nice solid mount in that they also use the two extra holes in the fairing on the sides above the signal lights as well as the three holes in the front for the stock shield mount. This means there is a lot of extra shield behind the fairing that wraps around on the bottom underneath the fairing in order to attach to the side holes. This stiffens up the whole thing, making for an excellent mounting system with no drilling.

I've added Saeing's slip-on anti-noise Stealth Micro-Swirl edging to the windscreen. This is wind tunnel tested stuff and simply slips onto the edge of the windscreen. It adds another 3 inches to the envelope already formed by your windscreen. It sells for about $10.00 a foot and I used a couple of feet on the Clearview screen as I ran it down the sides as well as at the top.

Thanks to the Internet, I found out about this great publication and Gino as been wonderful in answering a number of my questions via e-mail. As soon as I got this past issue I called Tim Barnard in Boise, Idaho and ordered a set of his powder coated rear racks designed to support soft saddle bag luggage. These are certainly quality products and can be noted in the photos. My center stand has been ordered from Capital Cycle and is scheduled to arrive later this month.

I've constructed a hinged luggage rack platform from and old wooden drafting board I'm owned for 40 years. It has metal edging on the ends that give it a little more of a finished look. It folds back to expose the rear part of the seat and grab rails should I have a short distance passenger or need to remove the seat for battery maintenance. When folded back the tool box is hidden. When folded forward the took kit is accessible and I have a large area for mounting my camping gear and possibly a spare tire at bottom of the gear next to the platform.

(Continued on page 4)

...Alaska Dreaming

(Continued from page 3)

One of the pictures shows my 3" PVC Pipe with caps for storing tire irons and tire repair stuff as well as tent stakes. It's fastened at the back, underneath by wood platform. Have had my rear signal lights mounted off the top of the license plate frame/bolts but recently returned to their original position. Now they are partially blocked by the PVC storage tube and will probably lower the signal lights a couple of inches before leaving on my trip.

A Ventura light guard is also in place. Aerostat tank panniers are really practical. They fit well and provide much protection for your legs as well as good storage. I've always liked Eclipse products and ordered their Interstate bags as they are large capacity and have two external compartments separate from the main compartment. The overall design is good, they are big and hold lots of stuff. I will only put lightweight bulky items in these bags. I'm not sure if they were the right choice for the KLR and might opt for the smaller totally waterproof ones from Aerostitch if I had it to do over again.

A clip-on clear/reversible map holder works well since tank bags aren't very adaptable to the KLR. I got the smaller one offered by Riderwarehouse/Aerostich. I used a handlebar mounted radar detector stand to Velcro my Eclipse electric vest thermostat to the handle bar. Small snap on thermometer and compass may be noted on the handlebars and my large numbered Wal-Mart clock is tucked away inside the fairing and can easily be read while riding. I also installed a throttle lock to occasionally relieve the old wrist.

If my budget allows, I'll add heavier duty front fork springs from Progressive, bar end mounted and/brush/clutch-brake lever protectors with hand guards, stainless steel braided brake lines, front and back brake disk guards and improved brake pads. Finally, a set of Avon Gripsters will be installed when I get to Seattle, just before heading north into Canada and Alaska.

Well, hope this newly converted Thumper rider will be properly equipped for Alaska. Counting the days until May 31 when I'll head for the Ferry terminal in Prince Rupert, BC for my boat trip to Haines, Alaska. Then the KLR test will truly begin. Oh yes, I just received a '97 vacation guide to the Northwest Territories. Toward the end of this colorful booklet, a couple of motorcyclist are shown getting ready to board one of the ferries. Both are riding KLRs. Does this tell me something?

Would welcome any feedback and suggestions from you seasoned touring thumper riders. Ride Safe! •

Paul Cain 104355.252@CompuServe.com

Dry Bags from RiderWearhouse

Shortly after the April/May issue of K650DSN was mailed, I began receiving e-mail from subscriber Bill Haycock and AeroDesign's Andy Goldfine regarding my reporting that the Dry Bags were no longer offered by RiderWearHouse. It seems there was a miscommunication of information and that report was erroneous. When I found that these bags were indeed available, I decided to get a set and give them a try.

The Dry bags arrived within a week, as all products from RiderWearHouse seem to do. I must say, though, that these are the only saddle bags I have ever owned that have required assembly with a thick stiffener having to be screwed into place in each bag.

(Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 3)

purchased some of them and hope to have them in time for the next issue. They are made by an Italian company named Ricci and are a bolt on application. **M&P 011-44-1792-775566 voice or 011-44-1792-781452 fax.** Note that they do not have a 24 hour order line and are 7 hours ahead of Mountain Standard Time.

Aluminum Panniers

Aluminum side boxes are soon to be a reality. Dan Doerr of Frank Doerr Equipment is working on a set for the KLR650 and the DR650. We hope to have a set on my KLR by early summer for testing. If you are interested in more info, call Dan Doerr at **(412)488-3787**

DUST

There is a new newsgroup on the internet dedicated to dual sport enthusiasts called DUST. To subscribe send the message "subscribe dust firstname lastname" to

(Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 4)

listproc@dorje.com where firstname is your firstname and lastname is your lastname.

Southwest Bike Travel-Zine

For those interested in traveling in the greater southwest region, check out Southwest BikeTravel-Zine on the Web. I will be doing some writing for them from time to time and they have loads of information for those interested in touring in California, Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, Colorado and Mexico, so check them out at **www.swbike.com**.

Utah Get-Together

The weather Gods smiled upon us and the Utah Get-Together was a success. About 20 riders showed up to enjoy some of the best dual sporting around. Look for a full report in the next issue of K650DSN.

T-Shirts

I still have some L and XL long sleeve T-shirts available with the cool "Pavement Ends" graphic. After

(Continued on page 6)

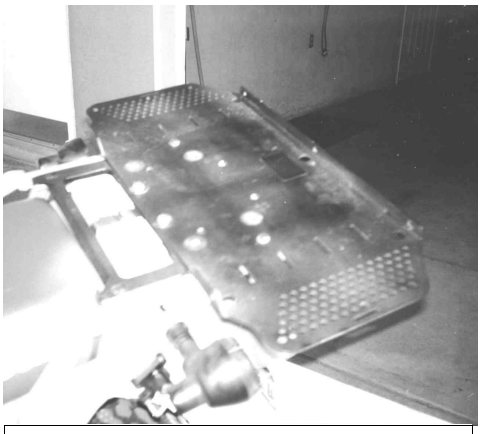
Top Of The Line Luggage Plate

Bruce Kentner

As a first time owner of a 1995 KLR and a new subscriber of the *K650DSN*, I thought I would start off with a small contribution. In much appreciated conversation with Gino about the bike and advise on accessories, I became aware of the fact that I would need to have a much larger rear platform to handle the essentials of "Comfort King" camping.

Now, I realize that many of you out there in dirt land have the ability to fabricate most of your own mods, but for those who are limited by the amount "Tim the Toolman" stuff you can cram into a single car garage, here's an idea. In the course of ownership of a terminally TOO TALL and TOO HEAVY BMW R1100GS, I bought a "Touring Trends/ Top Of The Line" or TOL brand rack. It's excellent quality and reasonable price ($89.95 + SH) has made it a great addition to the posterior end of several other bikes and now the KLR.

Installation will cost you about 30 minutes and will require the purchase of four metric bolts of greater length than stock (longer for the front 2 than the rear 2) and some washers. Simply remove the OEM rack and you will find that the bolt holes just to the rear of the bikes tool kit will mate perfectly with the front two mounting holes in the TOL rack. Now just use the OEM rack as a template to drill two new rear holes in the TOL rack and reassemble with the longer bolts and washers. Four bolts are all that are needed to adequately secure it and most "Pep Boys" or any well stocked auto parts store will have bins of loose bolts.



Bruce's TOL Plate installation allows access to the tool kit

This set up will amply clear the turn signals and while it may obscure their view from someone's monster truck positioned way to close to your back end , I don't think you'll find it that much of a detriment. The TOL has numerous holes and slots pre-drilled and armed with a drill or Dremel tool, you can easily customize it to fit any tie down situation.

As a matter of fact, you may want to enlarge a few of the pre-drilled holes to make it easier to slip bungies through them. Don't forget to save your OEM bolts as you will not want to part with this rack should you decide to sell your KLR. You can order the TOL through any BMW dealership. Happy motoring to y'all•

(Continued on page 12)

...Dry Bags

(Continued from page 4)

Uncharacteristic of a product from RiderWearHouse, my sets of bags were missing two straps that are required to hold the oversized flaps down. A quick call to RiderWearHouse and the straps were sent out no questions asked.

The basic design of the Dry Bags is about a simple as it gets. Each bag is made of a very stiff waterproofed canvas like material with all seams sealed. The bags are one compartment of about 15 liters each and have a thick neoprene backing to protect the bodywork of the bike. Points were straps join to the bag are riveted and sealed. You simply load the bag from the top and roll the flap down and buckle it in three places. By design, the bags expand up rather than out. The bags are of throw-over design, which have two wide Velcro straps at the top and Fastex buckle straps at the front and back. When mounted correctly, these are some of the most secure and solid soft bags I have ever had on a bike.

For commuting purposes, I find the Dry Bags to be somewhat more cumbersome than the MotoFizz bags I had been using. To put anything in or take anything out of the bag, you must undo the three buckles and roll open

(Continued on page 6)

...Dry Bags

(Continued from page 5)

the bag, put stuff in or take stuff out then roll down the bag and fasten the buckles. The large flat area afforded by the plastic stiffener, at the bottom of each bag is a big plus when carrying items that need to lie flat. Another nice feature is the large hexagon shaped reflective material applied at both ends of each bag for added visibility. Little details abound on these saddle bags, like the clips on the end of each strap that allow excess strap to be attached to the bag and not flap in the wind.

In the end, these are probably one of the best soft bags available to the dual sport rider. They are well made, very sturdy and will stand up to the abuse that only a DS rider could give a bag. Dry Bags are available from **Aerostich RiderWearhouse 1-800-222-1994**•

More on Dry Bags

Bill Haycock

Soft luggage designed for extended Dual Sport Adventure touring is a product that up until now has been a compromise at best! This writer has tried at least four different "Dual Sport" bags with varying degrees of success. Most bags tend to leak water and dust and many bags are just not tough enough to stand the rigors of extended touring on dirt and gravel roads.

During the last three months I have had the chance to use a bag from Aerostich called the "Dry Bag" saddlebags. These bags are made in Germany and seem to meet and exceed all the requirements I am looking for in a Dual Sport Saddlebag.

In January I was on a 35 day Dual Sport trip to Tierra Del Fuego and one of the riders was using the "Dry bags." I made a point of asking how they were holding up after 2,000 miles of dirt and gravel roads. The owner was more then happy with the bags. We had 13 days of rain and never did he have water in the bags! Dust was another problem we had on the trip and he reported the bags to be dust free.

During the trip, we met Jason, a rider who had just traveled from Canada, Central America, South America and was now at the tip of South America. He was using the "dry Bags" on his KLR 650 and had traveled close to 21,000 miles with these bags. He told me they were great bags! Never had one problem with them leaking or not holding up to the rigors of extended travel.

Returning from South America I was soon to depart to Honduras, Guatemala, and Mexico on a three week Dual Sport ride. I wanted to try these

(Continued on page 7)

Protect Your Bottom

Why the KLR Needs a Skid Plate

Why you want a better skid plate (REALLY).

Using the lowered KLR described earlier, we had a little incident with the Oil Plug on the 96 KLR. Riding in Nevada desert, near Hawthorn, my friend on a lowered KLR bottomed badly in one of the narrow washes we crossed. I was on an identical 96 KLR, but with out the lowering mods, and did not bottom out. My friend Richard, did not know he had punched the Oil Plug into the case, completely. The oil drained out, but the bike kept going. He said the power seemed down a little and it may have been a little noisy. He went about 2 miles of easy riding before another incident caused him to stop (well crash). It could be that the oil on the brake disk limited his ability to modulate the rear brake, resulting in a sliding low side.

Close inspection revealed that the oil plug was struck on the forward side and it pivoted into the crank case. The side of the case with the plug had enough cracks to eliminate any possibility of welding it, and the case only comes as a matched pair anyway. So a new case (about $600) is required. A full inspection of the motor and transmission reveled no excessive wear. Only in the oil pump was there even a minor scratch resulting from some

(Continued on page 12)

(Continued from page 5)

these are gone, there will be no more T-shirts made.

Word From Kawasaki

John Hoover and I had a short conversation with no real news to report for this issue. John was busy on the bike show circuit and returned my call from Chicago. He did confirm that Kawasaki did indeed run out of 1997 KLR650 models, but said the 1998 models would be released in June or July to make up for the shortage. He also mentioned that Kawasaki is looking at the possibility of marketing some aftermarket touring accessories for the KLR650 but was not specific as to what those accessories might be. In the dual sport arena, Kawasaki is looking to possibly bring a new air cooled 4 valve dual sport to the US market. It will be a 250cc with electric start and is currently called the Super Sherpa. Presumably, this model will do battle with the successful Yamaha Serow.

Advertising policy

You will notice that *K650DSN* now has some advertising in it. The current advertising policy is basically the same for all subscribers; If you subscribe you can advertise for a year. While this may seem like a rather strange way of doing business, I do have method to my

(Continued on page 7)

(Continued from page 6)
madness. Buy only requiring the usual subscription rate for advertising, I eliminate the chance of being dependent on advertisers and running the risk putting the *K650DSN* in jeopardy should an advertiser decide to pull out of the publication. Since this policy is so lax, I reserve the right to limit the size and content of each advertisement.

Filterwerks

Filterwerks is an Albuquerque based company that sells nothing but oil filters made by Fram. During a BMW club dinner, I had the pleasure of meeting Darren Thackery and discussing the possibility of offering oil filters for KL650 bikes. The rest, as they say, is history and now Fram oil filters are offered to you at a very competitive price. These filters will fit the KLR650, KLX650 and Tengai. Please see the Filterwerks advertisement in this issue.

Aerostitch

I have long been a fan of Aerostitch RiderWearhouse products. The

(Continued on page 8)

...More on Dry Bags

(Continued from page 6)
bags and was able to get a pair rushed to me before my departure. I used these bags on my KLR650 along with side racks designed by Tim Bernard in Boise, Idaho. The racks and bags together really solved the soft luggage problem on the KLR. Although we had little rain on the Central America ride we did have a lot of fine dust!

The bags performed as expected. They held more then enough gear, water proof and dust proof and mounted easily on the KLR. The quality of the material is first class! The material and straps are all well stitched and riveted.

I like the way these bags top load as you can easily get into the bags while on the bike! No Zipper pockets to leak or break! They mount easily and have a handy carrying system once they are off the bike.

If you have been discouraged with Soft luggage on Dual Sport bikes I highly recommend you consider the "Dry Bag" saddlebags. These bags are available from the **Rider Wearhouse Catalog. 1-800-222-1994 (ask for Sally) or email: aerostich@aol.com** •

RIDE,
EAT,
SLEEP,
REPEAT.
EXCEPTIONAL GEAR FOR EVERY KIND OF RIDER.
Call for our 100 page catalog filled with revolutionary
AEROSTICH clothing & hundreds of other exceptional products such as
clothing, maps, luggage, boots, books,
electronics, tools & more.
DARIEN JACKETS, PAGE 8
GLOVES, PAGE 22
FREE CATALOG
1-800-222-1994
218-722-1927 • FAX 218-720-3610
8 S. 18TH AVE. W. • DULUTH, MN 55806
RIDERWEARHOUSE CATALOG

WHEN PERFORMANCE COUNTS
QUALITY ENGINE R & D
Exotic Race Engines.
One Of A Kind Engines
& Custom Built Components.
Motorcycles & Automotive
Less than 10 minutes from Elmira's South Side on Route 14 South
(717) 596-3030
Steve Kesselring
RR 1 Box 3125
Gillett, Pa 16925

Qaulity Engine R&D Lowering Links for KLR

Big surprises come in small packages. Necessity is the mother of all invention. How many times have you heard these age old adages? Probably more than you care to remember, right? But I cannot think of a better application of these sayings than when describing the Quality Engine R&D lowering links for the KLR650. Necessity certainly demanded that these little wonders be made since many potential dual sport riders with smaller inseams screamed for a lower KLR. And Quality Engine answered the call with these beautifully finished links that allow the rear shock to hang lower thus reducing the seat height. But how easy is it to install the links and how do they work?

I had the opportunity to install a set of links for subscriber, Faye Hickerson. Technically,

(Continued on page 9)

Reader Feedback

Dear Gino,
What is the tallest most quiet windshield that can be installed on the KLR650 without significant modification to stock equipment? I have fallen in love with the attributes of this (KLR650) machine (mine is a 1997 model) but find the need for more wind protection. Any information on this topic would be appreciated.

Steven Malek

Steven,
I must plead ignorance when it comes to windshields on the KLR. I know that Clearview (1-800-798-6089) makes a windscreen that is 4 and 7 inches taller than stock and Rifle makes one that is about the same height. I have requested information from both vendors. The Rifle seems to be the one of choice by our readership and is available through your local dealer. How 'bout it folks, anyone have more info for Steven? Send it in. -Ed.

******

Dear Gino,
Thank you for sending the sample March-April issue. Although I find you publication to be informative, the quality of print and pictures are sub-standard and I find you subscription rate to be exorbitant. I can get 12 issues of Rider for under $12.00. Thanks but no thanks.

Douglas M.

Douglas,
All I can say is that this is not a money making venture for me, but more a passion. I do not claim to be a journalist, as a matter a fact, I barely passed English in school! In my own defense, I would also like to add that although you will see advertising in the K650DSN, I do not charge an advertising rate like Rider or any other magazine for that matter. The main purpose of this Newsletter is to provide information to dual sport enthusiasts. -Ed.

******

Dear Gino,
On Jan 8, I left the warm weather of southern California and rode my 1995 KLR650 to McAllen, Texas and then to the Panama Canal. I was with Pancho Villa Moto-Tours and Skip, the owner, loves KLR's. At the end of the ride, the Goldwing, BMW and Harley riders all said, "Myles, looks like you had the best bike for this trip!"

Myles Elsing

Myles,
Sounds like you had a good time. From what I've been hearing, the KLR seems to be the bike of choice for south of the border excursions. -Ed.

******

Dear Gino,
I recently picked up the March/April 1997 issue of your newsletter at R&S Kawasaki, and found it very interesting... May I make two suggestions regarding your newsletter. First you need better proofreading. The March/April issue has lots of typos and grammatical problems. Second, your illustrations are not getting the information across that the original photographs probably contain. Is there a better, clearer way to reproduce photographs? Perhaps I should explain that I am a former professional photographer and as a consequence, this sort of thing bugs me. David Minor

David,
I agree there is no excuse for typos and I will work on rectifying that problem. As for the photographs, there are better ways to reproduce the images and the newsletter as a whole. However, my goal is to keep subscription rates low which means the Newsletter is reproduced on conventional photocopy equipment and not postscript machines. You will notice in this issue that the pictures are larger and the font is smaller so I can get the same amount of information into the publication and yet have room for larger images. Thanks for your input. -Ed.

******

Dear Gino,
I don't often suggest an endorsement of a particular Company but in the case of Pancho Villa Motor Tours I feel I can.

Since it appears that many subscribers to the Kawasaki 650 Dual Sport News are of the "Adventure Touring" type I feel it would be a service to introduce them to the tours offered by Pancho Villa.

Pancho Villa has been leading tours to Mexico, Central America, and now, South America for over 14 years. I have been on most of the tours offered as well as having lead many of the tours. This is a first rate company that is owned and operated by a true adventure touring individual! A number of tours

(Continued on page 9)

(Continued from page 7)
company is owned and operated by motorcycle enthusiasts and after talking with Andy Goldfine, I can assure you that if it is offered in their catalogue, you know it works. Some items may be a bit higher in cost than competitors, but their exemplary service is worth it. Please se the RiderWearhouse advertisement in this issue.

Special Thanks...
Thanks go to Fred Hink, owner of A**rrowhead Motorsports**, who helped out one of our riders at the Utah get-Together. If you ever need anthing for you bike while in Moab, UT, give Fred a call. Check out his ad in this issue.

New Look
Though this issue of K650DSN may appear small, it contains about 25% more info than the March/April issue thanks to reduced font and better space management.

...Reader Feedback

(Continued from page 8)

would appeal to members of our News letter. One, a 10 day tour called the "Sierra Madre Expedition" is particularly suitable to the off road adventure tourer. It is a tour through the heart of the famous Copper Canyon country of the Sierra Madres in Mexico. Other adventure tours offered are tours to Terra Del Fuego in South America. (6,000 miles with 2,000 miles off road throughChile and Argentina) Another tour starting next year is a tour through Bolivia and Peru with off road work in the Andes.

If you feel the subscribers to K650 News would benefit from this type of information and resource please contact:

Skip Mascorro
Pancho Villa Moto Tours
1-800-233-0564

email:102502.631@compuserve.com
Bill Haycock

******

Dear Gino
I previously owned a 1985 KLR600. The new KLR650 vibrates worse than it, or any other mc I've owned except for a BSA B50MX. I plan to add even heavier bar-end weights. If that doesn't reduce the vibration to an acceptable level, I'll get an F650 BMW. I currently have a 1981 BMW R100RT, 1982 XV920RJ Yamaha, 1985 Cagiva Elefant, 1995 Triumph Tiger.
Anonymous from survey

Vibration is one of those attributes of motorcycles that seems to affect people differently. I find the incessant buzz of an inline four to be truly annoying, while the heavy low frequency vibration of a twin or single doesn't bother me a bit. The F650 is smoother than the KLR650, but not by much. Anyway, when you put aggressive DS tires on a bike like I do, engine smoothness becomes irrelevant. - Ed.

******

Dear Gino,
I enjoy riding my KLX on the township and county roads of the very rural eastern Ohio county and surrounding counties where I live. The only problem I've experienced off-road with my machine is the lack of traction in muddy conditions. I'm sure that a good set of D.O.T knobbies would greatly improve this situation, but I'm not sure how well knobbies would hold up to the 70% of the riding I do on pavement.
John Miller

John,
You face one of the great dilemmas of dual sports. Even the best dual sport tires are a compromise in extreme conditions. There are two very good D.O.T knobbies tires on the market right now; the Perilli MT21 and the Metzeler MCE 6 Days. You can expect about 4k miles out of a rear tire and may 9K miles out of a front. Fortunately both tires are inexpensive. Beware, however, that handling on pavement suffers dramatically. -Ed.

***K650DSN* reserves the right to edit letters for clarity or length. Please send letters to PO Box 698, Sandia Park, NM 87047. If you do not want your letter to be printed, please be sure to mention it in your text.**

...Lowering Links

(Continued from page 7)

the links are a piece of cake to install. You simply remove two bolts, lift the swing arm about 2 inches and bolt on the new links. Logistically, however, the installation is a little more complicated for the average home mechanic, though any competent dealership service department should be able to handle the task easily.

The rear end of the bike must first be suspended in the air before you can remove the existing linkages. If you try to remove them with the weight of the bike on the linkage, the rear of the bike will collapse and you have a bigger problem on your hands. I used heavy duty tie down straps in conjunction with my Handi-Lift to suspend the rear of the bike. I then removed the linkages and used a small bottle jack to raise the swing arm to the correct angle and bolted the new linkages in place.

With the rear of the bike lowered, the front end was next on the agenda The fork tubes have to be slid up in the triple clamps about 1 1/2 inches. Be sure to loosen the small clamps that hold the top of the fork boots tight as these will bind enough to not allow the tubes to slide.

Faye was kind enough to allow me to ride the lowered KLR. To be honest, I didn't know what to expect on this lowered dual sport. What I found was a bike that took on some excellent handling manners, due to its new lowered center of gravity. I could turn better, tighter and basically handle the bike more comfortably than my stock KLR. The lower CG and

(Continued on page 10)

...Lowering Links

BEFORE: *Faye can barely touch one toe with the KLR's stock suspension height.*

AFTER: *Faye can easily touch the ball of each foot with the lowering kit installed.*

(Continued from page 9)

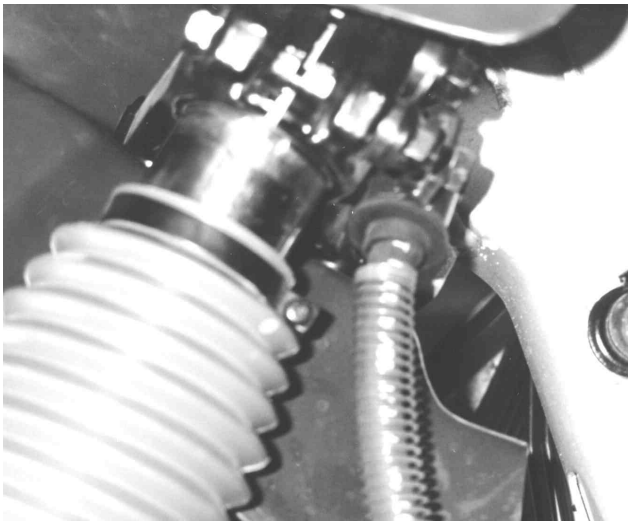
wide handle bars team up to allow the rider simply throw the bike into corners or make tight, feet-up U-turns. All of this does carry the price of two inches less ground clearance, so intensive off road riding would certainly bash the undercarriage of the bike.

If you are the more aggressive off-road type and choose to put this lowering kit on your KLR, you best protect the under carriage with a stout bash plate. For those who are 90% street and 10% off-road riders, however, I would seriously consider this kit, even if you can already touch the ground fine. I believe it makes that big of a difference in the handling and it will not cut into leg room since the distance from the seat to the foot pegs is unchanged. With the lowering inks, the KLR reminds me of the good-ole days of the low seat scramblers that I grew up on.

All of the lowering links that were offered through *K650DSN* have been sold. They are still available, though, through **Quality Engine R&D (717)596-3030** and **Dual Star (206)776-7433** •

Below left: *The highly finished linkages look out of place on the dirty side of a KLR.*

Below right: *Be sure and loosen the clamps at the top of the fork boots as they will prevent your fork legs from sliding up when adjusting the front end.*



Chain Maintenance

I've recently received numerous calls and letters asking for the correct way to adjust and lube the final drive chain on KL650 bikes. I also received a few calls from subscribers who have either stripped the counter shaft splines or damaged the counter shaft from having the chain too tight. Then, when working on the KLX project bike, I found the previous owner had the drive chain so tight, that I could barely measure 1/2 inch of play, I decided it was time to put a little something about chain maintenance in the Newsletter.

The drive chain is the only way power can get from the engine to the rear wheel; it's that simple. Keep the chain lubricated and adjusted to specifications and your chain, sprockets and counter shaft (the shaft that supplies power out of the transmission) will treat you nicely. Neglect your chain, and your sprockets and chain will wear prematurely or worse, you could damage you counter shaft which is a $800+ repair bill. There are two basic operations to chain maintenance; adjustment and lubrication. Just because you do one, doesn't mean you can skip they other. Once you get a system down, you can perform these tasks quickly.

Lubricating the chain is the most frequently performed chain maintenance task. At this point, I should mention that there are two different types of chain; O-ring and non-O-ring. To the best of my knowledge, All KLR650's, Tengai's and KLX650's came with O-ring chains, so those will be the only ones we discuss in this column. They are called O-ring chains because at each link there is a set of O-rings that lock lubricant inside the roller and pin assembly. Although these chains require less frequent lubrication than non-O-ring chains since the lubricant is sealed inside, they do require frequent cleaning. Dirt, dust and debris can dry or tear the O-rings and cause the sealed lubricant to leak, so it is important to keep the O-rings clean and moist with oil.

The best cleaning solvent to use on a chain of this type is kerosene or gear oil. Do not use gasoline, alcohol or any other cleaner of that nature as it will dry out the o-rings and your chain will fail on you. The manual specifies that the chain should be clean/ lubricated every 500 miles. I usually lubricate mine at least every 300 miles or once a week. I use 80w-90 gear oil in a toner applicator I purchased from a beauty supply store. An important key to lubricating a chain is to doit when the chain is warm after riding. This keeps the gear oil fluid as it cleans the chain. Gear oil on a cold chain will thicken and not remove as much crud as it potentially could. Once you have layed a bead of oil along each row of plates, wipe the chain with a cloth to remove the excess and you are done.

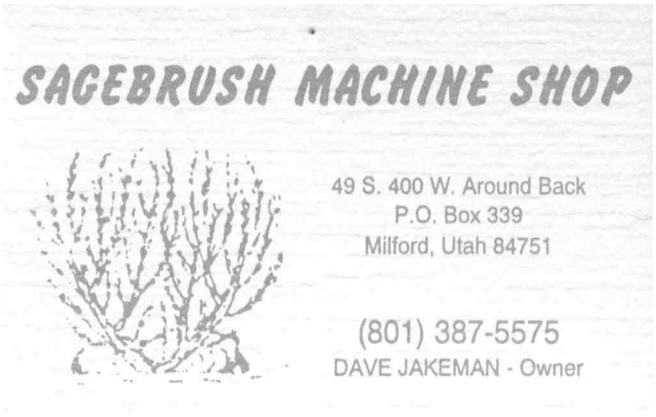
Adjustment is performed less frequently than chain lubricating but is just as important of not more. I check the adjustment of my chain according to the manual specifications; bike on its side stand and freeplay of about 1.5 to 2 inches. To adjust the chain, you must loosen the rear axle nut and use the axle adjuster nuts at the end of each swing arm leg. Place a small ruler up against the bottom of the swing arm about halfway between the front sprocket and the rear sprocket. Move the chain up and determine how much play there was. Roll the bike forward to advance the chain and repeat the process.

Chains wear in different locations, so there are tight spots and loose spots. Check your chain in at least 3 different locations. The freeplay should be within specification at the tightest spot of the chain. I check my chain adjustment every two or three weeks, usually when I check tire pressures. For a loose chain, tighten the adjuster nuts about 1/8 to 1/4 turn each at a time and recheck the freeplay on the chain. Once you have the freeplay within specification, tighten the locking nuts and then tighten the axle bolt. Before I tighten the axle bolt, I usually move an old screw drive along the chain until it is wedged between the rear sprocket and the chain. This pulls the axle forward and tightens the adjster block against the swingarm.

Periodically inspect your sprockets for wear and missing teeth. Also check your chain for freeplay from side to side. At the first sign of wear, replace both front and rear sprockets and the chain. My mehod of chain maintenance is only one way of doing it. I'm sure that there are others who have tried and true techniques and I'd be more than willing to publish them. All I can say is that after 12K miles on the original chain and sprockets, I have not seen any abnormal wear and there is plenty of life in the components •

FUTURE PLANS

I still plan on being at the BMW MOA rally in Fredricksburg, TX. on June 24-27. I also plan on being at the National Thumper Rally at Captain's Cove, WI. on September 3 & 4. Captain's Cove is near Pairie Du Chein in the lower southwest corner of the State.



Top Of The Line

(Continued from page 5)

Top of the Line Luggage Plate --Continued
Gino Pokluda

After I read the above article by Bruce, I decided I would also give the TOL luggage plate a try. I called Touring Trends and talked with owner Frank Walker about the *K650DSN* and the adaptation of his TOL plates to the KLR650. To say he was enthused about the idea of putting one of these on the KLR would be an understatement. He promptly shipped out the BMW R1100GS plate and awaited my verdict. The TOL plate is made from 1/8 inch aircraft aluminum and finished in a black wrinkle powder coat. The plate I received was 23 inches by 10.5 inches. Just like Bruce, I decided to use existing bolt holes in the KLR650 luggage rack .

I have long since removed my tools from the spot provided by Kawasaki, so I decided to mount my TOL plate further up on my existing rack. In this case I used the last four bolts on the KLR rack. I purchased 4 6mm X 30mm counter sunk Philips head machine screws to mount the plate. Like Bruce, I used the rack plate off of the KLR as a template. Be sure that the plate is mounted no further than the indent on the front of the KLR rack plate. This will allow the seat to be removed without having to remove the TOL plate.

I also replaced the balance of the rack screws with philips head screws for consistency sake. The addition of the TOL allows for a large duffel to rest on the back of the KLR without flopping over onto the turn signals or exhaust and basically adds a whole new dimension in utility to the KLR. Shortly after I mounted my TOL plate, I had to transport the fork legs from my TDM850 to the local dealer to have them rebuilt. Instead of having to use my truck to get them into town, I simply wrapped them in towels and lashed them to the TOL plate and used the KLR to transport them. I have made a template of my mounting application and sent it to Frank at Touring Trends.

One last note, the TOL plate does not increase the weight capacity of your KLR luggage rack, it only increases the area on which you can load you cargo. You can reach **Touring Trends Inc** at **408-292-4026, 3015 Payne Ave., San Jose, CA. 95128** •

ARROWHEAD MOTORSPORTS
Motorcycle Service, Parts, Accessories

Fred Hink
801-259-7356

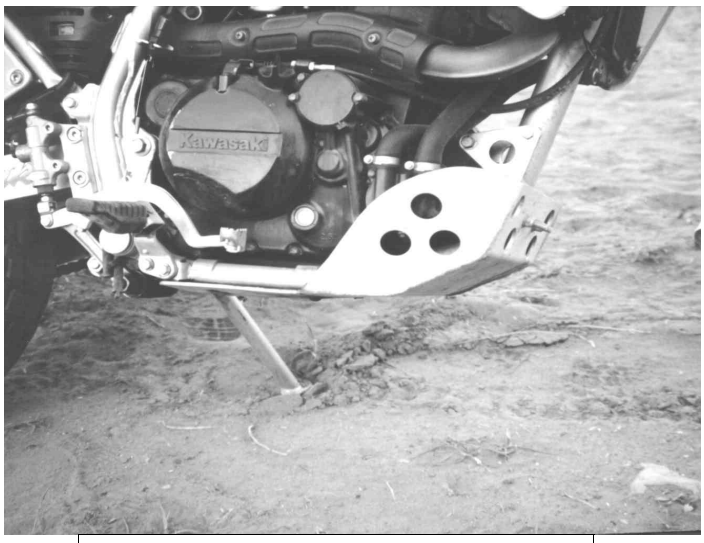
2970 Desert Rd.
Moab, Utah 84532

...Skid Plate

(Continued from page 6)

contaminant in the oil. I guess dumping the oil prevents contaminants from traveling through the engine!.

Anyway it looks as though only the case needs to be replaced, but it is a big job. So if you ride aggressively off road, or carry a heavy load I suggest some real skid plates. Covering the oil plug area as well. The stock plastic skid plate was partially broken at one of the rear mounts and may have not deflected the offending rock as much as it would have had it not been broken. In any case, the way the plug sticks down, behind the minimally effective skid late is asking for trouble •



The Moose skid plate is as beefy as they get.

FILTERWERKS
OF
ALBUQUERQUE
HAS

AlliedSignal
FRAM®
Oil Filters

FOR:
KAWASAKI
KL250
KLX300
KL650
CH 6070 WITH O-RINGS
$4.25 EACH OR $3.95 EACH
FOR A CASE OF TWELVE (12)
(505) 266-0277

VISA CHECKS WELCOMED

Dual Sport Alliance

Something Completely Different

Welcome to the first issue of *Dual Sport Alliance*, a supplement that will be geared towards bikes other than the KL650 series machines we normally talk about. In the last issue of *K650DSN* I told you that this supplement would be an additional charge on top of your normal subscription. Since then I have changed my mind and *Dual Sport Alliance* will be free. There is a hitch however, as *DSA* will not appear in every issue of *K650DSN*. I plan on covering bikes that are dual sport or dual sport derived in nature. As you can see, the bike covered in this issue is the BMW F650. Bikes that I plan on covering in the next few issues include the Suzuki DR350 which is best selling dual sport in America, BMW R1100GS, the most desired bike by survey responders, KTM 620 RXC, Yamaha TDM850, Honda XR650L and anything else that comes along and looks real interesting. Enjoy •

Dual Sport Comparison

Lorainne Curtis

I currently own a 1994 KLR650 and a '97 BMW F650. I ride mostly paved back roads, but still want to be able to handle any interesting gravel/dirt roads I pass along the way. At 5'2" with a 28" inseam, I have trouble getting a dual sport bike that fits. Also, not having a lot of experience on the dirt, I wanted a bike that was very user friendly.

I've had the KLR since last spring and have had a really good time riding on some of our back roads, both paved and gravel. It has a quick response to steering input and is surprisingly fast for a dual sport. I enjoy it even more on the unpaved back roads. You sit on top of the bike, instead of in it, giving you the feeling that you're more in control on the rougher roads. It also helps, when you're in the middle of nowhere, to know that you can go 300 miles between fuel stops.

The windscreen on the KLR works quite well, but there is little protection for the legs. I have noticed some vibration at the handlebars and footpegs, but it isn't something that I find distracting, although on a long day it might get old. The seat height, at 35", is stretching it for inseam deprived individuals. I had to take half the foam out of the seat in order to swing my leg over and remain on the bike.

The KLR is advertised to weigh in at 337 lbs. dry weight. I've weighed the bike with a full tank and an aftermarket center stand at 409 lbs. Even so, I find the

(Continued on page 14)

BMW F650: Dual Purpose or All Purpose?

Gino Pokluda

Some of my fondest memories of motorcycling are when I rode my neighbors Yamaha Big Bear scrambler. For those who are unfamiliar with the "scrambler" class of machine, it was basically a street bike, usually a twin, that had high mounted exhaust pipes, wide bars and trials tires. In my mind, these bikes were "all purpose" motorcycles that didn't intimidate the rider with asphalt shredding power or handling characteristics of a miss-guided missile. The BMW F650 is the closest thing to that "all purpose" genre that I have experienced since then.

When I went to the BMW dealer to pick up the F650 for a daylong test ride, I was pretty excited. After all of the hype and being delayed by freak winter storms in the spring, I was finally going to get to ride The Machine. For three months, every motorcycle magazine raved about the neat little single that would revolutionize the way we though about thumpers. *BMW Owners News* had article upon article about the new Beemer. If I didn't know better, I'd thought they were talking about the Second Coming of Christ. Reading the articles, the magazines basically asked why no one had ever thought about putting a four-valve liquid cooled 650 single in an all purpose frame. Uh, excuse me… but I think Kawasaki had that idea TEN YEARS AGO!

After some initial problems getting the big single started, I was under way, my first stop was to top off with fuel. Opening the filler cap, I was met with the tiniest hole you could have in the filler. Impossible to see how much fuel is

(Continued on page 15)

Dual Sport Comparison

weight distribution on the bike to make it feel lighter than it is. It's quite affordable at $4799, has a 12 month/unlimited mileage warranty, and numerous aftermarket accessories as attested to in prior issues of this newsletter.

The F650 was introduced to the most of the motorcycling world, except the US, at the Frankfurt Motor Show in September of '93. Due to its popularity in Europe, BMW finally introduced it here in the States this year. It's being built in Italy by Aprilla and has an Austrian Rotax engine. I picked my Funduro up in December and have put on a few 300 mile days on it since then. I'm finding it to be quite a comfortable bike. It responds quickly, making it easy to handle both in traffic and on the open road.

The motor is smooth running, producing very little, if any, vibration. With my height, I find the lower seat height on the Funduro suits me and it has more overall wind protection with its fairing and windscreen. I do find that since I sit low on the bike I get wind noise and turbulence on my helmet off the wind shield(if you sit at least two inches taller, your helmet would be in clean air with little turbulence). The Funduro starts easy even after sitting a few weeks and doesn't need the choke on as long to get it warmed up. It's been getting around 50 mpg and has gone almost 200 miles before needing to turn to reserve. It weighs in at 429 lbs. with a full gas tank. BMW has a slew of touring accessories it including: hard bags in two sizes, heated grips, hand guards, an engine crash bar, & an accessory plug for heated clothing. In the aftermarket arena, Acerbis has a 7 gallon tank and Staintune has come out with a sport exhaust pipe. The style of the BMW is more sport bike oriented with great detail taken on its fit and finish. It's pricy at $7490, but has a 3 year/3600 miles warranty.

I am enjoying both bikes. I like riding the KLR on the dirt, but I haven't had the BMW off road yet so don't know if it handles as well. With the F650, concern for the cost of new plastic might lessen my enjoyment and with the extra ground clearance and greater travel suspension on the KLR, it seems like it would be more attuned to the dirt. On the street, for the long haul, I prefer the F650. It has less vibration, better wind protection, and a more sport bike type ride •

KLR650		**F650**
4-Stroke, Liquid Cooled Single	Engine Type	4-Stroke, Liquid Cooled, Single
651cc	Displacement	652cc
100 x 83 mm	Bore & Stroke	100 x 83 mm
9.5:1	Compression Ratio	9.7:1
DOHC, 4 Valves	Valve System	DOHC, 4 Valves
Keihin CVK40	Carburetion	Twin Mikuni BST 33 B316 CV
47 bhp @ 6500 rpm	Max Output	48 bhp @6500 rpm
40 ft/lbs @5500 rpm	Max Torque	42 ft/lbs @ 5200 rpm
5-speed	Transmission	5-speed
Semi-Double Cradle, High Tensile Steel	Frame Type	Single Loop, Tubular Frame
58.9 in.	Wheelbase	58.3 in.
38 mm Air-Adjustable Fork	Suspension, Front	41mm Fork
Uni-track w/5-way preload & 4-way Rebound Damping	Suspension, Back	Monoshock, remote preload, and adjustable rebound damping
9.1/9.1 "	Wheel Travel, Front/Rear	6.7/6.5
90/90-21 Tube	Tire, Front	100/90-19 Tube
130/80-17 Tube	Tire, Back	130/80-17 Tube
Disc/Disc	Brakes, Front/Rear	Disc/Disc
6.1 gallons	Fuel Tank	4.62 gal./0.53 gal. reserve
35 in.	Seat Height	31.5 "
409 lbs.	Weight-Full Tank(measured)	429 lbs
796 lbs.	GVWR	819 lbs.

...F650

(Continued from page 13)

going in the tank, you have to trust the pressure valve on the pump, which means your paint job will be faded from spilled gas within a year or two. Once filled I was on my way down the interstate to my part of the world, the New Mexico Mountains. One thing I really noticed on the F650 was its low seat height. When tooling around town I could place both feet flat on the tarmac with a good bend in my knees and this was the stock height for the bike. Put the official BMW lowering kit on and I'd be lower than I sit on my Virago. To get a KLR650 that low, you'd have to take the wheels off and set it on its skid plate! The low seat height is due to the shaped seat and the semi-perimeter, square section frame. The dry sump engine also helps in that BMW could place the engine lower which in turn also lowers the center of gravity. The low seat unfortunately cuts into precious leg room which is already less than what I have on my TDM850. For shorter riders, this bike is a blessing and would be a wonderful place to spend the day.

Wind protection is very good and freeway handling is superb. The engine is quieter, vibration is less and power is up a tad from a stock KLR650. I didn't experience any twitch in the front end whatsoever even on rough milled pavement, thanks to the 19-inch front wheel, which wears a slightly wider tire. I did notice that the suspension was somewhat harsher than the KLR's when passing over expansion joints.

Off the freeway and headed down some country roads, the F650 is in its element. After a few nice fast sweepers, I forgave the bike for all of the nit-picky faults I had found with it. The bike's lower center of gravity allows it to corner better than my KLR could ever hope to. "This was one neat bike", I thought to myself as I headed toward some dirt and gravel roads.

Turning on to an unpaved road, I noticed the front end wanted to dive into the turn, something you really don't want your machine doing in off-road conditions. Counter steering to correct my line, the street biased TX66 began to protest and loose traction. Just after I was able to get my heart back where it belonged, a section of wash board came up overwhelmed the F650's suspension with a pot hole at the end bottoming the bike with authority. Further down the road, the F650 managed to bottom twice more. I stopped and turned the slick pre-load knob to high to gain better control of the rear. The day before, I had brought my KLR through this same section of road and had none of these problems. Granted my front end has Progressive springs and I have my rear shock dialed in, I just didn't think a stock KLR would have this much difficulty. Fortunately, after a few miles, the road smoothed out considerably and life on the Beemer was good again. For fast country two laners and smooth graded roads, the F650 is a great bike.

After about 50 miles, I brought the F650 home to inspect it. This is one very refined motorcycle. The seat is flat and firm and should provide all day comfort. Don't plan on moving around though since the stylish step locks you in place. The weird styled gas tank cover limited my knee room and at 5'10", taller riders will certainly complain. The mirrors on the F650 are among the best I have ever experienced in motorcycling and the switchgear is top notch.

Another thing I liked is that you don't need to know any secret Knights-of-Columbus handshake to operate your turn signals like you do on other BMWs. As with all BMWs, the F650 comes stock with a center stand and is by far the easiest bike I have ever had to place on one. The windshield would be the first thing to go on my F650 if I ever got one. It obscures vision in off-road conditions and scratches just by looking at it. I would opt for the small unit from the ST model. The F650 pilot is treated to nice instruments including speedometer, tachometer, clock and the full range of idiot lights including a temperature light. I would prefer a temperature gauge instead of the clock, the time of day means nothing when your engine over heats. Over heating is most likely not in the cards for the F650 as it has a radiator that is roughly twice the size of the KLR650 unit.

Maintenance on the big single looked fairly straightforward except for the strange location of the oil drain plug. The F650 carries its oil supply in the frame and the oil drainplug is right in front of the exhaust header; only BMW would do that.

From a functionality perspective, the F650 can be adorned with many after-market accessories, which include two sizes of hard luggage. Unfortunately, there is no way the luggage can be as nicely integrated into the bike as in other BMW's due to the F650's bulbous side panels and exhaust muffler that makes a KLR650 muffler look like a drag pipe.

If that doesn't stop you, the whopping $800 price tag for side bags might. The styling department also got a hold of the F650 luggage rack, which has 75 square inches of surface area as opposed to the KLR's 96 square inches. Like Kawasaki did with the Tengai, BMW chose to use ABS plastic on the F650 as opposed to the soft polyethylene plastic used on the KLR and KLX. Where polyethylene will bend and scuff in a fall, ABS simply shatters.

For a second opinion, Sinjin Eberle also took the F650 out for a spin. Sinjin also complained about his knees hitting the strange bulge at the top of the tank and the bikes tendency to want to dive into corners. He also noted a

(Continued on page 16)

Life behind bars! *I could think of worse places to be than behind the bars of the F650.*

... F650

(Continued from page 15)
strange feel in the brakes that I passed off as the pads being too new to have correctly seated themselves. Like me, he agreed that the F650 would be a great street bike, but would have difficulty on any surface other than pavement or smooth graded dirt.

So how does the F650 compare to the KLR. Well, it doesn't. To compare the two bikes would be comparing apples and oranges. The BMW is far more refined than the KLR650 and small details abound.

The easy access rear shock preload knob that can be adjusted from the seat and the clean, easy to use axle adjusters are a couple of nice touches. A plastic shroud that makes up the fixed position dash is another, which nicely hides wire and electrical connections, and removable rubber pads that reveal real steel foot pegs (are you listening, Kawasaki?) add to the package. Given that, I was surprised that fork boots were left off of the front forks as were any form of hand guards.

BMW has always made bikes that look substantial. They seem to like wide, broad fuel tanks, even if they carry less than five gallons fuel, and curvy, organic looking bodywork. Sticking a couple of BMW roundels on a DR650 just wouldn't work for BMW and they knew it. The F650 is a wonderfully competent motorcycle standing on its own merits and would look right at home next to an R1100RT in the garage.

For me, however, there are just too many little quirks that would get in the way of ever really enjoying the bike as much as I do the KLR650. The small front wheel pretty much discounts any possibility of getting a wide variety of rubber mounted to the bike.

The clock instead of a temperature gauge, acres of brittle plastic, tiny luggage rack, and drain plug positioned to insure long lasting burn marks on your hands, just don't cut it form me. If these bother you but you really want an F650, not to worry. The after-market world loves BMW and product developers will be falling all over themselves to produce larger fuel tanks, beefy skid plates, 21-inch wheel kits, big luggage racks, hand guards and auxiliary lighting kits. Paris-Dakar kits will almost be a certainty.

When I think about how some of my rides would have been if I were on the F650 instead of the KLR, I don't see much difference. At the end of my 640 mile day coming back from Salmon, Idaho, I would have probably needed only two Advil's if I were on the F650 as opposed to the four I took when I got off the KLR650. On the White Rim Trail, I would have needed tranquilizers to alleviate the anxiety I would have had if the F650 fell over on the rocks. In my mind, the KLR simply does more for less.

Riding the F650 back to the dealer, I had to admit that I really liked the bike. This mostly due to the fact that I love singles. If the F650 were my mount at the Utah Get-Together, however, I would have had second thoughts of taking it on the off-road rides.

The F650 is not a dual-purpose bike, it is and all purpose bike. For the light duty off-road rider, who wants a bike that will last for a while, this is the bike. Its fit and finish are unequalled and it reeks of quality, as it should for $7,600. While it may not have the bang - for-the-buck quotient that the KLR delivers, it is still a great machine. Like all great bikes, the F650 is a bike that works •

DIRECTORY

If you would like your name to appear in the next *K650DSN* directory, please send you name, address, phone number and e-mail address to **PO BOX 698, Sandia Park, NM 87047.**

FINAL NOTES

I would like to thank Motorsport of Albuquerque for allowing me to ride the BMW F650 for an extended period of time. I would also like to thank all of you who submitted articles to *K650DSN* for this particular issue and future issues. Remember, this is your Newsletter and the and the more you put into it the more you get out. Thanks again and I'll see you on the road sometime.

Gino •